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Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden*



Photo credits to Robert Parente

Imagine growing some of these luscious mangos, just steps from your kitchen, in a tub on your lanai!

Condo Mangos: Mangos in the Lanai!

Doug Caldwell, University of Florida, Collier County Extension

Mangos, *ah*, *Mangifera indica*, one of the royal tropical fruits! But, because mango trees can overwhelm a yard, with some varieties exceeding 60 feet in height and 100 feet in width, this is a tree for very big yards. A tree for homeowners that won't miss the turfgrass shaded out by the tree's large canopy and are aware of the varmint attraction and mess from the uneaten fruit.

However, now there is hope for the condo dwellers that desire fresh fruit as there are newer varieties that have been selected for their dwarfy nature. These are small trees that only grow six to ten feet (a little pruning may be required). The Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden has released its 2004 'Curator's Choice', a list of 15 mango cultivars that are selected with the patio grower in mind. Now you can think of placing a mango in a tub on the lanai or into a small yard design, see: <http://www.ftg.org/horticulture/mangocurators.html> for the complete list.

This is a relatively new concept and there may be some drawbacks, but the results will be worth the experimentation. Things to remember, mangos are frost sensitive. Temperatures of 26 to 28 degrees F may kill younger trees. Mangos are related to poison ivy. If you have never tested this, go slowly with handling plant parts, the resin from stems, fruit (especially the skin of green mangos) have caused blistering on sensitive people. In extreme (rare?) cases, volatiles from the flowers may cause allergic reactions such as eyelid and facial swelling and respiratory difficulties if prolonged exposure occurs. Simply washing after handling plant parts will avoid problems for most people. Don't pig-out on peck of mangos, if it is your first tasting experience. Also, where will you be when the mangos need picking? This isn't a fruit tree for the typical snowbird. If you aren't in town from May through late August, you will miss the major harvest period.

Now, on to the honey, peachy flavored rewards. Some of the 'Curator's Choice' cultivars to consider are 'Duncan', 'Neelum', 'Manilita', 'Ice Cream', 'Lancetilla', 'Cogshall', 'Fairchild', 'Graham' and 'Mallika'. Fairchild's website information, which reads like a wine connoisseur's evaluation with a mango twist, includes details on fruit size, nuances of flavor, color and harvest times. 'Ice Cream' is green when it is ripe, but 'Cogshall' has an "eye-catching yellowish-orange skin, overlaid with a brilliant crimson blush". Fruit weight can range from a few bites with the eight-ounce 'Ice Cream' mango or to a few meals, with the two to five pounders from "Lancetilla". 'Rosigold', which Fairchild's Mango Curator, Dr. Richard Campbell, describes as "rich, aromatic, and sweet, with a hint of the Asian Tropics" ripens in mid to late March. The "exceptionally high quality South Indian dessert mango", 'Neelum' ripens in October.

Pest problems don't require constant vigilance, but include: mites, scales, thrips and powdery mildew, which can destroy flower panicles and cause a crop failure. See, more on pests and how to grow mangos at: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/MG216>.

Lovebugs help pollinate mango flowers as they go about their normal business.



Pollination is primarily by flies, ants, wasps and moths. Honeybees aren't especially attracted to these flowers. I noticed a lot of lovebugs frequenting my trees' panicles. I knew that they had to be beneficial in some way other than as hood ornaments. There is some self-pollination, but you may need to open the door for a few hours to let the pollinators into your screened lanai. My wife stands loyal to peaches and tends to turn her nose up at mangos, but I'm a mango guy now. They are just so refreshing and try fresh mango ice cream, wow!

For more information on home gardening, contact the University of Florida, Collier County Extension Service, Master Gardener Plant Clinic, at 353-2872. If you have a specimen that you want identified, the Plant Clinic, at 14700 Immokalee Rd., is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 9 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

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